NEWS ANALYSIS 1-0805 MAY 19, 1976
CHRIS KERN

THE PRIMARIES IN MICHIGAN AND MARYLAND

ANNCR: CHRIS KERN HAS SOME OBSERVATIONS NOW ON THE PARTY PRIMARY ELECTIONS THAT WERE HELD YESTERDAY (ON TUESDAY) IN MICHIGAN AND MARYLAND.

VOICE: PRESIDENT FORD SAID HE NEEDED A VICTORY IN MICHIGAN AND HE WON THERE EASILY. SOME COMMENTATORS SAID THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE "DECISIVE" PRIMARY ELECTION FOR MR. FORD AS A RESULT OF HIS RECENT DEFEATS TO RONALD REAGAN IN SEVERAL OTHER PRIMARY STATES, BUT IT'S OBVIOUS NOW THAT DESPITE HIS EARLIER LOSSES THE INCUMBENT PRESIDENT IS IN THE RACE TO STAY. IF ANYTHING, THE MICHIGAN RACE SHOWS HOW INDECISIVE THE PRIMARIES HAVE BEEN AND HOW TENTATIVE THE VOTERS FEEL ABOUT THEIR CHOICES. MR. FORD'S MICHIGAN WIN WAS OF LANDSLIDE PROPORTIONS, BUT MR. REAGAN STILL HOLDS A SUBSTANTIAL LEAD IN NATIONAL CONVENTION DELEGATES, THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL ULTIMATELY CHOOSE THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE.

JIMMY CARTER STILL LOOKS LIKE THE PROBABLE WINNER IN THE DEMOCRATIC RACE, BUT A NUMBER OF THAT PARTY'S VOTERS ALSO SEEM TO HAVE THEIR DOUBTS. MR. CARTER LOST IN MARYLAND TO CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR JERRY BROWN, A NEWCOMER TO THE NOMINATION CONTEST WHO HAS A BETTER CHANCE OF SPOILING CARTER'S PLANS THAN OF BECOMING THE NOMINEE HIMSELF. THE IRONY IS THAT MR. BROWN IS BEING VIEWED BY SOME AS THE FRESH NEW FACE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONTEST -- A DESCRIPTION, AT LEAST ONE COMMENTATOR POINTS OUT, THAT NOT LONG AGO WAS APPLIED TO MR. CARTER.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF BOTH NOMINATION RACES HAVE PROVIDED MORE THAN THEIR USUAL SHARE OF EXCITEMENT FOR THOSE WHO WATCH THIS COUNTRY'S ELECTION CONTESTS CASUALLY, AND A GREATER THAN USUAL DEMAND FOR THE ANALYSES OF THOSE WHO WATCH THEM FOR A LIVING. THE BALANCE SEEMS TO SOME TO BE SHIFTING BACK AND FORTH PRECIPITOUSLY, BUT THE POSSIBILITY REMAINS THAT THERE IS LESS TO THESE PRIMARY ELECTIONS THAN MEETS THE EYE. IN THIS VIEW, THE MOOD OF THE VOTERS IS NOT SO MUCH UNSTABLE AS UNSURE.

REPUBLICAN PARTY VOTERS ARE SO FAR UNABLE TO AGREE THAT THEY WANT FOUR MORE YEARS OF MR. FORD, BUT THEY HAVE YET TO DECIDE THAT MR. REAGAN IS THE RIGHT SUBSTITUTE. THOSE WHO HAVE VOTED IN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRIMARIES SEEM GENERALLY INCLINED TOWARD MR. CARTER, BUT WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM AND WITH RESERVATIONS. THE SAME MOOD SEEMS TO HOLD FOR THE COUNTRY AS A WHOLE. THE AMERICAN PUBLIC SEEMS VAGUELY DISSATISFIED WITH THE PRESENT CAUTIOUS REPUBLICN ADMINISTRATION BUT SUSPICIOUS OF ANY LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE.

IT'S TOO EARLY TO KNOW WHETHER THE VOTERS WILL CONTINUE TO FEEL TENTATIVE ABOUT THEIR CHOICE UNTIL NOVEMBER, WHICH COULD MEAN THE NEXT AMERICAN PRESIDENT WOULD BEGIN HIS TERM OF OFFICE WITHOUT THE "MANDATE" (RINGING ENDORSEMENT) FROM THE ELECTORATE THAT THIS COUNTRY'S POLITICIANS HOLD SO DEAR. BUT THE PRIMARY ELECTIONS HAVE RAISED THAT QUESTION, AND IT MAY TAKE THE GENERAL ELECTION TO RESOLVE IT.

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